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ABSTRACT

The last four decades have seen a dramatic increase in the number of women entering employment. This is particularly true in Europe and although more European women are working outside the home, the patterns of female employment have changed very little. An analysis of these patterns is presented. It was found that women continue to dominate specific fields, particularly teaching and service providing. An investigation of the interpersonal behavior differences among 117 American women from the southeastern United States in three work roles--homemakers, women in traditional occupations, and in nontraditional occupations--was conducted and the sex-role orientation, attitudes toward success, and demographic indicators were examined in order to consider the interplay of these variables with female occupational role and interpersonal behavior. A second focus of the study is on the cross-cultural comparison of the psychological and work variables in women of two different cultures: America and Portugal. Thirty-one Portuguese women were a preliminary comparison sample. The American results showed significant differences between groups in self-perceived interpersonal behaviors and the findings contradicted current stereotypes. The cross-cultural data, although preliminary, indicates differences between the countries in social desirability, aggressive and assertive behaviors, and in sex-role attitudes, which seem to reflect the different stages of economic development. (MKA)

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Interpersonal and Attitudinal Factors in Women's Work Role: Cross-cultural Comparison

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Interpersonal and Attitudinal Factors in Women's Work Role: Cross-cultural Comparison

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The last four decades have seen a dramatic increase in the number of women entering employment throughout the world (Pallares, 1993; Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 1995). In Europe, two thirds of the jobs created in the European Community between 1985 and 1990 have been occupied by women (Comissão das Comunidades Europeias, 1992). However, the patterns of female employment have changed little, women occupying traditionally "female occupations", such as teaching and services. This phenomenon has prompted research on the personal and social/institutional facilitators and inhibitors of female career development. Some studies have examined differences between women of various work role orientations in an attempt to differentiate personality, background and attitudinal patterns (Hoffman & Hale-Benson, 1987; Swatko, 1981; Varhely, 1984). However, there is a gap concerning the interpersonal correlates of work role orientations. This neglect is surprising given the common stereotypes used to contrast career-oriented women as being aggressive and independent with homemakers as being passive and submissive, descriptors that reflect interpersonal behaviors. Gender stereotyping regarding interpersonal behaviors has been seen as an influential barrier to women's career development, affecting women's access to leadership positions (Fagenson, 1990; 1993; Reskin & Padavic, 1994).

An investigation of interpersonal behavior differences among women with varying work roles is needed in order to verify or disconfirm existing stereotypes and

examine female interpersonal behaviors in a more scientific manner. This study investigates interpersonal behavior differences among women in three work roles: homemakers, women in traditional occupations and in nontraditional occupations. The study also examines sex-role orientation, attitudes toward success and demographic indicators in order to consider the interplay of these with female occupational role and interpersonal behavior.

A second focus of this study is the cross-cultural comparison of the psychological and work variables in women of two different cultures: America and Portugal. These countries represent variations in workforce and economic development, reflected upon the status of women in these countries. The increased cultural diversity and mobility in the workforce leads us to question the universality of work behavior. Considering the interplay of gender and cultural issues (Keita & Hurrell, 1994), the study of the impact of these cultural variations on women`s work roles and their psychological correlates becomes imperative. The variables considered in this study are particularly prone to cultural influences (Marsella, 1994). A cross-cultural comparison will aid in clarifying existing gender and cultural stereotypes regarding psychological correlates of work role.

American Data

Method

Subjects

The subjects are 117 American women from the Southeastern United States. They include women from three work roles, 28 homemakers, 49 women in traditional occupations and 40 in nontraditional occupations. The women were classified in traditional versus non traditional work roles based on the sex ratio in the occupation considered (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995). The 31 Potuguese women are a preliminary comparison sample including tradionals and nontraditionals. In order to control for age, race and generational differences, the subjects were only white women between the ages of 30 and 50. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Tables 1 and 2.

Instruments

The instruments were the Anmerican and Portuguese versions of the Interpersonal Behavior Survey (Mauger & Adkinson, 1980), the Attitudes Toward Women Scale- Short (Spence & Helmreich, 1978), the Impostor Test (Clance, 1985) and the Social Behavior Rating on Mother designed by McIntyre to evaluate the women's perception of their mother's interpersonal behavior.

Results

American Women

The differences in interpersonal behavior were investigated using ANOVA planned comparisons with work role as independent variable and the interpersonal

behavior scales as dependent variables. Similar comparisons were computed for sex-role and impostor feelings. Means and ANOVA planned comparisons are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

The results showed significant differences between groups in self-perceived interpersonal behaviors, with nontraditionals being more assertive than homemakers and homemakers less aggressive and more passive. Traditionals scored similarly to homemakers in assertiveness and relationship behaviors but similarly to nontraditionals in aggressiveness. Regarding sex-role attitudes, the nontraditional group endorsed more liberal attitudes than traditionals or homemakers. No significant differences were found between homemakers and nontraditionals in impostor feelings, although traditionals reported stronger impostor feelings than nontraditionals.

Hierarchical regression analyses, with work role and attitudes toward women as main predictors and interpersonal behaviors as criterion, were computed in order to ascertain the proportion of unique variance accounted for by these two variables. Interaction effects of work role x attitudes toward women were explored. Summary results of the regression analyses can be found in Table5.

Sex-role orientation was a significant mediating variable of the effect of work role on interpersonal behavior for refusing demands and dependency. More liberal attitudes were associated with higher refusing demands and lower dependency for women in traditional occupations. However, no significant relationships were found for other behaviors or work roles.

Cross-cultural Comparison

The cross-cultural comparison of the Portuguese and American women in traditional and nontraditional occupations was made using t tests by country and for the investigation of interaction effects MANOVAs with work role and country as independent variables. The results of the t tests were significant for 12 of 21 Interpersonal Behavior Scales (see Table 6), the Portuguese women presenting higher social desirability values, more direct and passive aggressiveness, and lower assertiveness than the Americans, with the exception of the Frankness scale in which the Portuguese scored higher. Regarding sex-role orientation, the Portuguese women show more nontraditional and nonegalitarian attitudes than their fellow Americans (see Table 7). However, we found no significant differences between countries in impostor feelings.

The MANOVA results were nonsignificant for the effect of work role on the dependent variables. The interaction country X work role was significant for the interpersonal behaviors General Assertiveness and Initiating Assertiveness ($F(1,115)=4.82, p<.03$; $F(1,115)=4.54, p<.04$), with the Americans scoring higher than the Portuguese only for those women in nontraditional occupations.

Conclusions

The American data reveals interpersonal behavior differences among women of differing work roles but not in the direction suggested by current stereotypes. The similarity of the traditionals and homemakers in assertiveness and of the nontraditionals and homemakers in aggressiveness challenge work and gender stereotypes. In fact, compared to the United States norm group, the homemakers in this sample are average

assertive and the nontraditionals average aggressive, which opposes stereotypical perceptions.

The trend in sex-role attitudes from more conservative (homemakers) to more liberal (nontraditionals) is expected but sex-role does seem to serve as a mediating variable for some interpersonal behaviors. For instance, although the traditionals are less assertive than nontraditionals, those traditionals with more liberal values seem to be able to break out of their work role in a few areas of interpersonal behavior. The moderate scores found for impostor feelings in all groups suggest that the impostor phenomenon may be generalized beyond professionally high achieving women, although the object of these fears of success may differ with the work role.

The cross-cultural data, although preliminary, is promising, showing variations in interpersonal behavior that reflect previously found differences between the two cultures (McIntyre, 1985). However, it seems that these differences depend on the work role in the case of assertive behaviors, being more salient for the nontraditional occupations.

The cross-cultural findings regarding women's sex-role orientation are unexpected since the Portuguese women show more nontraditional attitudes toward women than the Americans. It appears that there is more congruence between the Americans' sex-role attitudes and sex-role orientation, as a group, than for the Portuguese in which the lack of assertiveness seems to lag far behind their nontraditional attitudes, even for those in nontraditional work roles. This discrepancy between behaviors and attitudes may reflect the period of political and cultural transition that Portugal has been going through in the last 20 years.

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Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the American Sample (N = 117)

Characteristic		n	%	M	SD
Work Role	Homemaker	28	24		
	Traditional	49	42		
	Nontraditional	40	34		
Age				39.5	6.3
	30-39	59	51		
	40-50	58	49		
Education				17.5	3.3
	High School	10	9		
	Some College	12	10		
	4-year College	33	28		
	Grad. School	62	53		
Marital Status					
	Single	10	8		
	Married	88	75		
	Sep/Divorced	17	15		
	Widowed	2	2		
# of Children				2	.86
	None	35	30		
	One	23	20		
	Two	38	33		
	Three or more	21	17		

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of the Portuguese Sample (N = 31)

Characteristic		n	%	M	SD
Work Role					
	Traditional	18	58.1		
	Nontradition.	13	41.9		
Age				42.8	7.7
	30-39	11	33.3		
	40-50	20	66.7		
Education				19.4	2
	5-year College	6	23.1		
	Grad. School	25	76.9		
Marital Status					
	Single	5	16.1		
	Married	18	58.1		
	Sep/Divorced	4	12.9		
	Widowed	1	3.2		
# of Children				1.2	.98
	None	10	32.3		
	One	7	22.6		
	Two	12	38.7		
	Three or more	2	6.5		

Table 3

Means and ANOVA Planned Comparisons on Interpersonal Behavior Survey Scales by Work Role: Homemakers (H), Traditionals (T) and Nontraditionals (NT) (N = 117)

	Work Role			F for Planned Comparisons		
	Home	Trad	Ntrad	H-T	H-NT	T-NT
Scale	M	M	M	F	F	F
Denial	57.0	51.9	55.9	2.91 t	.05	2,62
Infreq.	47.1	46.1	45.9	.00	.02	.02
Impr. Managem.	54.4	51.6	53.1	1.37	.27	.49
General Aggress.	40.8	46.2	45.7	10.91***	8.41**	.10
Hostile Stance	42.0	46.8	45.1	7.21	2.86 t	1.06
Express. of Anger	43.9	48.2	45.9	4.50*	.86	1.64
Disreg. Rights	42.6	45.5	43.3	3.23 t	.18	2.27
Verbal Aggress.	42.5	47.9	48.2	9.84**	9.91**	.02
Physical Aggress.	43.5	46.0	44.8	3.17 t	.83	.86
Passive Aggress.	42.8	45.1	44.8	1.58	1.09	.04
General Assert.	53.1	55.1	59.8	.72	7.41**	4.87**
Self-Conf.	51.5	53.3	55.8	.54	2.98 t	1.40

	Work Role			F for Planned Comparisons		
	Home	Trad	Ntrad	H-T	H-NT	T-NT
Scale	M	M	M	F	F	F
Initiat. Assert.	53.5	57.5	62.1	3.88*	16.16***	6.03**
Defend. Assert.	50.7	52.3	56.5	.36	4.42**	3.12 t
Frankness	49.3	53.9	55.6	3.75*	6.36**	.58
Praise	54.9	55.6	56.6	.09	.58	.30
Request. Help	50.4	53.6	53.2	2.20	1.56	.04
Refusing Demands	52.1	52.5	56.1	.03	2.95 t	3.23 t
Conflict Avoid.	50.2	48.7	44.3	.43	6.05**	4.50*
Depend.	47.5	48.2	42.3	.07	4.19*	7.10**
Shyness	50.0	51.3	50.8	.27	.08	.06

Note: df = (2, 114)
t $p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

Table 4
Means and ANOVA Planned Comparisons on Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) and on Impostor Scale (IP) by Work Role: Homemakers (H), Traditionals (T) and Nontraditionals (NT) (N = 111)

	Work Role			F for Planned Comparisons		
	Home	Trad	NTrad	H-T	H-NT	T-NT
Scale	M	M	M	F	F	F
Attitudes Toward Women	26.6	35.9	39.5	26.23 ***	46.35 ***	4.98 *
Impostor Feelings	52.9	56.4	48.6	.93	1.30	5.79 *

Note: AWS df = (2, 107); IP df = (2, 108)

*p < .05 **p < .01 ***p < .001

Table 5

Summary of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Results with Work Role and Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) as Main Predictor Variables and Interpersonal Behavior Survey Scales as Criterion Variables (N = 117)

	Predictors					
	Work Role		Att. to Women		Work Role x AWS	
Criterion	R^2	F	R^2 Change	F	R^2 Change	F
Denial	.04	2.07	.03	3.68 t	.05	3.09 *
Infreq.	.00	.00	.00	.43	.00	.02
Imp. Mgmt.	.01	.67	.00	.14	.02	.85
General Aggress.	.09	5.18 **	.00	.04	.02	1.04
Hostile Stance	.05	3.09 *	.00	.31	.01	.33
Express. of Anger	.04	2.04	.03	2.96 t	.03	1.44
Disregard of Rights	.02	1.18	.00	.25	.04	2.10
Verbal Aggress.	.10	5.86 **	.01	1.04	.01	.74
Physical Aggress.	.03	1.46	.01	1.22	.00	.22
Passive Aggress.	.01	.61	.00	.15	.04	2.11
General Aggress.	.07	3.87 *	.01	.76	.03	1.94

Criterion	Predictors: Work Role		Att. to Women		Work Role x AWS	
	R^2	F	R^2 Change	F	R^2 Change	F
Self-Confid.	.02	1.02	.00	.05	.01	.75
Initiate Assert.	.13	7.96 ***	.01	.61	.01	.48
Defend Assert.	.05	2.72 t	.02	1.65	.03	1.99
Frankness	.05	2.71 t	.00	.00	.03	1.55
Praise	.00	.21	.00	.19	.00	.04
Request. Help	.02	1.30	.01	.60	.01	.54
Refusing Demands	.04	2.07	.04	4.28 *	.05	2.74 t
Conflict Avoid.	.06	3.12 *	.00	.07	.03	1.44
Depend.	.06	3.64 *	.03	3.95 *	.09	5.46 **
Shyness	.01	.30	.00	.01	.01	.43

t $p < .10$ *$p < .05$ **$p < .01$ ***$p < .001$

Table 6

Means and significant t-test Results for Interpersonal Behavior Survey Scales by Country: America and Portugal

	Country			
	American N = 89	Portuguese N = 31		
Scale	M	M	t	p
Denial	3.30	5.13	-6.17	.001
Impr. Managem.	14.01	15.94	-2.60	.012
Express. of Anger	4.79	7.16	-2.70	.009
Physical Aggress.	1.79	2.61	-2.43	.019
Passive Aggress.	6.45	8.87	-2.41	.019
General Assert.	40.07	36.03	2.16	.035
Self-conf.	11.51	9.13	3.69	.001
Initiat. Assert.	11.96	10.16	2.47	.017
Defend. Assert.	12.96	8.13	8.54	.001
Frankness	7.80	12.48	-7.47	.001
Praise	6.96	5.16	4.66	.001
Request. Help	5.09	4.03	2.93	.005

Table 7

Means and t test Results on Attitudes Toward Women (AWS) and on Impostor Scale (IP) by Country: America and Portugal

	Country			
	American N = 89	Portuguese N = 31		
Scale	M	M	t	p
Attitudes Toward Women	37.66	40.71	-2.76	.007
Impostor Feelings	52.93	55.52	-.84	ns

Abstract

This study investigates interpersonal behavior differences among 117 women in three work roles: homemakers, women in traditional occupations and in nontraditional occupations. Sex-role orientation, attitudes toward success and demographic indicators are examined in order to consider the interplay of these with female occupational role and interpersonal behavior. A second focus is the cross-cultural comparison of the psychological and work variables in women of two different cultures: America and Portugal. The American results showed significant differences between groups in self-perceived interpersonal behaviors but contradicted current stereotypes. The cross-cultural data, although preliminary, indicates significant differences between countries in social desirability, aggressive and assertive behaviors, and in sex-role attitudes, reflecting the different stages of economic development.